

to your

Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Winter 2007

Prevent Spreading Colds & Flu

Randell K. Miyahara, Pharm.D.

The winter months should be a time of fun and celebration! But the stress of preparing for those celebrations, and being shut in due to the colder weather makes it easier for you to catch a cold or flu—which isn't a lot of fun. Here are some easy ways you can prevent catching a cold or flu to keep the good times rolling!

Keep 'em clean: Cold and flu "bugs" are easily picked up by touching surfaces like door knobs, light switches or counter tops that have been exposed to someone with a cold or flu. Once you've picked up the "bug" on your hands, the "bug" gets into your body through touching your eyes, nose or mouth. One of the easiest ways to prevent catching a cold or flu is to wash your hands and make sure those around you do too! The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following steps to properly wash your hands:

1. Wet your hands first, then apply soap—any will do, liquid, bar or powder.
2. Rub your soapy hands together vigorously and work up a good lather.

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Visit our new patient education website at
<http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>

Recipe for Health MEDITERRANEAN BAKED FISH

Ingredients:

2 tsp olive oil	1 Tbsp fresh grated orange peel
1 large onion, sliced	1 tsp fennel seeds, crushed
1 can (16 oz) whole tomatoes, drained (reserve juice) and coarsely chopped	1/2 tsp dried oregano, crushed
1 bay leaf	1/2 tsp dried thyme, crushed
1 clove garlic, minced	1/2 tsp dried basil, crushed to taste black pepper
1 C dry white wine	1 lb fish fillets (sole, flounder, or sea perch)
1/2 C reserved tomato juice, from canned tomatoes	
1/4 C lemon juice	
1/4 C orange juice	

Directions:

1. Heat oil in large nonstick skillet. Add onion, and sauté over moderate heat 5 minutes or until soft.
2. Add all remaining ingredients except fish.
3. Stir well and simmer 30 minutes, uncovered.
4. Arrange fish in 10x6-inch baking dish; cover with sauce.
5. Bake, uncovered, at 375° F about 15 minutes or until fish flakes easily.

Yields: 5 servings Serving Size: 1/2 cup
Each serving provides:

Calories: 177	Cholesterol: 56 mg
Total fat: 4 g	Sodium: 281 mg
Saturated fat: 1 g	

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Getting Involved in Your Community

Amy Kelsey RN, BSN, PHN

Have you ever wondered what resources are available in your community? There is a great deal available to each one of us as residents of the communities of the Bay Area. It would be impossible to list them all here, but you can look them up in your own community phone book or use your favorite computer search network.

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Prevent Spreading Colds

3. Keep this up for a full 20 seconds (imagine singing “Happy Birthday” twice to time yourself!)—it takes that long to dislodge the “bugs” from your skin...
4. Rinse off the soap.
5. Use a paper towel or air dryer to dry your hands.
6. Use a paper towel to turn off the water and to open the bathroom door.

If you aren't near a sink, use antibacterial lotions or gels. Wash your hands after you sneeze or cough, shake someone's hand, or use any public door handles. (Ref: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/op/_resources/OOP%20Brochure%2012.20.05.pdf)

Support your local immune system: Your immune system is your first line of defense against the germs that cause the common cold and flu. These steps sound easy enough, and keeping them in mind during a busy holiday schedule may help keep you full of holiday cheer!

1. Avoid second-hand smoke: Keep as far away from it as possible! It is responsible for many health problems, including millions of colds.
2. Get enough sleep: Late bedtimes and poor sleep leave people vulnerable.
3. Drink water: Your body needs fluids for the immune system to function properly.
4. Stay active: Exercise stimulates the disease-fighting white blood cells in the body to move from the organs into the bloodstream.

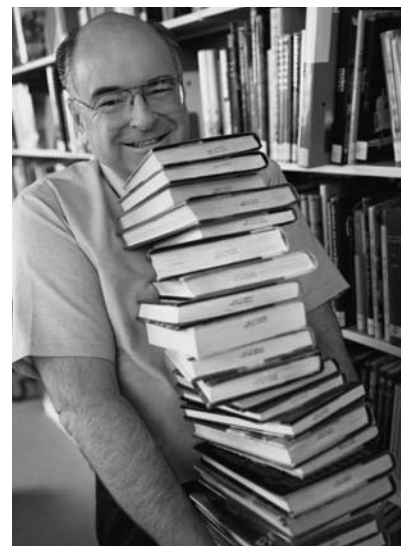
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000678.htm#Prevention>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002083.htm>

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- First of all, it is amazing what services are offered by our libraries. They provide online computers, and instruction to use those computers. There are also books, music CD's, videos, DVD's, social events, book clubs, and opportunities to help others by teaching them to read.
- Many churches/spiritual centers provide services during the week as well as on Sunday. They often have meetings, volunteer opportunities, and music events.
- In addition, there are Community and Senior Centers (under Parks and Recreation in the phone book) in each city which are available for a variety of classes or activities. They also have gyms, exercise equipment, pools, parks, and concerts.
- Adult education is another idea. Schools sometimes send out class schedules, but they can be found in the phone book under the school district for your city.
- Last but not least, community colleges are great places to check out more opportunities.

In each city there are lots of volunteer needs. We can gain so much from getting involved and serving through one of these networks. It is a great way to meet people and learn new things. Find a friend who can go with you, or share your discoveries with a friend. Some of these networks are the Red Cross, school districts, food banks, homeless shelters, and veterans service organizations (you thought I'd never mention you, right?). So in summary, we all have a huge network of valuable resources available to us, usually within 5 miles of our homes. For more information call one of them. They are there to serve the community! ■



Positive Coping Strategies

Alisa Krinsky, M.S., C.T.R.S., R.T.C.

If you are working to overcome a negative behavior, learning to develop positive coping strategies is key to preventing a setback, called a relapse. You may be dealing with substance abuse, depression, anxiety, an eating disorder or another negative behavior. Positive coping strategies include exercise, deep breathing, meditation, yoga, talking with a friend and taking a walk. All of these have proved successful in reducing a stress reaction.

In addition, it is important to learn relapse warning signs. These warning signs often present during stressful situations. You can develop a coping plan to prevent destructive behavior.

Stressful situations often lead to relapsing. Learning to manage stress is a good way to prevent relapse. One major approach to dealing with everyday life stressors is to increase positive experiences in your life. Examples are pleasurable activities, good social support and relaxation. Everyone has stress to manage on a daily basis!

Below is a list of things to control daily stressors.

a. Simplify Your Daily Routine: Avoid conflicts and tight time lines.

- b. Learn to Say "No": Avoid over commitment. Learn to judge how much you can handle. Learn to say "No" firmly and kindly.
- c. Manage Your Time: Learn to reduce interruptions. Break large tasks into smaller ones. Estimate the time involved in tasks and responsibilities.
- d. Nutritional Management: Nutritional problems can be stressors in themselves or may increase the effects of other stressors. Avoid stimulants such as coffee and colas. Avoid excessive sugar. Eat regular, well-balanced meals.
- e. Noise: Another way to reduce stress levels is to avoid exposure to noise. This includes loud or sudden noises, annoying noises, and noise which interrupts activities.
- f. Social Support: Friendships developed and maintained through fun activities help people cope with life stress and help maintain or improve health. Building a strong support network is a key component of relapse prevention
- g. Practice Communications Skills: Learn to be assertive, initiate conversations, active listen, give and receive

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Take the Flu Quiz

Test your flu vaccine savvy with these true or false questions, then check your answers below.

True or False?

- Q1: People can die from the flu.
- Q2: Even if I get the flu vaccine, I can still get a mild case of the flu.
- Q3: The side effects of the flu vaccine are worse than the flu
- Q4: Not everyone can take the flu vaccine.
- Q5: Only older people need flu vaccine.
- Q6: You must get the flu vaccine before December.

Answers

A1: True

Flu is a highly infectious disease of the lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 114,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die because of the flu.

A2: True

Flu vaccine protects most people from the flu. People who receive flu vaccine can get the flu but will be far less sick

than someone who has flu and has not received flu vaccine. Flu vaccine does not protect you from other viruses that sometimes feel like the flu.

A3: False

The worst side effect you are likely to get with injectable vaccine is a sore arm. The nasal-spray flu vaccine might cause nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or cough.

A4: True

You might not be able to get this protection if you are allergic to eggs, are very sick with a high fever, or have had a severe reaction to the flu vaccine in the past.

A5: False

Adults and children with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease need to get flu vaccine. People who are active and healthy can also benefit from the protection of the flu vaccine offers.

A6: False

Flu vaccine can be given before or during the flu season. While the best time to get flu vaccine is October or November, getting vaccinated in December or later can still protect you against the flu.

<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/fdaandyou/issue02.html>

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3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA CAPITOLA OPC

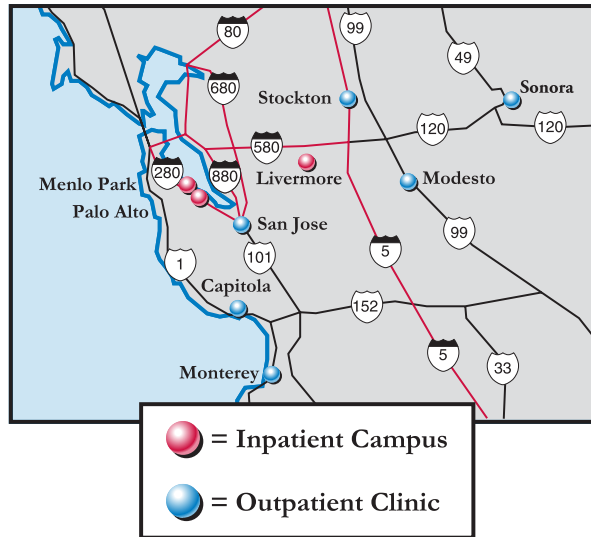
1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,
Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
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VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3000

VA SONORA OPC

19747 Greenley Road
Sonoma, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA STOCKTON OPC

500 W. Hospital Road
Stockton, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov



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Positive Coping Strategies

compliments, enhance close relationships, problem solving and decision making skills.

- h. Outlets for Frustration: We humans also deal better with stressors when we have outlets for frustration. Take a run or walk, swim, find a hobby, listen to music, or talk with a friend.

Finally, understanding the role of leisure in coping is essential. Lack of meaningful, pleasurable leisure experiences may lead to boredom, anxiety and stress. These conditions can place individuals at risk for engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as drinking, smoking, drug use or over-eating. It is important to ensure that each day you plan and engage in a fun, relaxing activity that gives you pleasure and enjoyment. Whether you choose to play cards, chess, take a walk, swim or have coffee with a friend, creating time to engage in meaningful, joyful experiences each day can help you develop a healthier lifestyle and more positive ways of coping with life stressors that often lead to relapse.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

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To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCs veterans and their families.

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Tips for Healthy Living

- Walk during lunch hour.
- Drink water before a meal.

From www.smallstep.gov